

Odsjek za anglistiku

Filozofski fakultet

Zagreb

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Mannerist Features in *Hamlet*

(smjer: književno-kulturološki)

Kandidat: Leona Grujić

Mentor: dr. sc. Borislav Knežević

Ak. godina: 2016/2017

Zagreb, veljača 2017.

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION: DEFINING MANNERISM .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A problematic poetics .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Mannerist literature in relation to tradition: conventions and conceptual intricacy.....	5
Mannerist literature in relation to reality: the fictional and the real .....	6
Mannerist literature in relation to itself: self-reflexivity .....	8
<b>MANNERISM IN <i>HAMLET</i> .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Tradition and innovation .....</b>	<b>9</b>
That would be scanned: Shakespeare's verse .....	9
Crafty madness: the conceit .....	13
<b>By indirections find directions out: the fictional and the real .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Wild and whirling words: hendiadys .....	18
Purposes mistook: dislocated scenes and deflected attention .....	20
To be or not to be, or both: chiasmus .....	24
In my mind's eye: the play(s) within the play .....	27
<b>The observed of all observers: self-reflexivity .....</b>	<b>31</b>
To kill so capital a calf: authorial self-reinvention .....	31
I know not seems: Hamlet and the player .....	33
What is it you would see: the role of the audience .....	34
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>36</b>

# INTRODUCTION: DEFINING MANNERISM

## *A problematic poetics*

The term Mannerism derives from art history. It refers primarily to a group of Florentine and Roman painters and sculptors who started to move away from the Renaissance ideals of spatial unity and “proper” proportions around 1520. The works of artists like Michelangelo, Rosso da Fiorentino, Jacopo da Pontormo, Parmigianino and others are characterized by intricacy of design which contradicts classical norms and emphasizes artificiality.<sup>1</sup> The threats of war and disease, along with the temptations of better patronage, led some of these artists to scatter across Europe, turning Mannerism into an international style by the end of the century.<sup>2</sup>

In literary studies, Mannerism was first introduced in the works of R. E. Curtius and G. R. Hocke. Both scholars perceived literary history as a kind of perpetual alternation of classical and mannerist, or anti-classical, tendencies (Curtius 279-280; Hocke 1984: 13-25). Later scholarship rejected this ahistorical view and limited Mannerism to the period between approximately 1520 and 1620. Today, a consensus on whether literary mannerism is a recurring phenomenon in literature of all periods or a literary period in its own right is still inconclusive. This essay proposes that Mannerism is a distinct period in literary history, beginning in the first half of the sixteenth and ending in the first of the seventeenth century.

This view, however, is not without its problems. Firstly, as Arnold Hauser remarked in his seminal work *The Social History of Art* (1951): “even the most general characterisation of Mannerism contains very varying features, which it is difficult to gather into a uniform concept.” (94) Even a passing glance at the available bibliography on Mannerism shows that various scholars describe Mannerism differently, often conflating it with either the Renaissance or the Baroque. Secondly, the confusion surrounding the definition of Mannerism points to larger problems inherent in literary periodization. Literary development is a continuous process, which means that any attempt to slice it into mutually distinct chunks is misleading. This is especially true for pre-Romantic periods, when the process is very gradual. In his *On Beauty*, Umberto Eco advocates that periods should not be considered as solid, mutually independent blocks, but as stages in a fluid cultural process “that only briefly and often only apparently crystallize[s]

---

<sup>1</sup>Their works typically displayed characteristics such as “‘misplaced’, provocative, metaphorical” colours, often “unsuited to the object as referent” (Maquerlot 20), figural contortion that avoids “subordinating all [...] gestures to [...] one clear gestural intention” (Maquerlot 22), distorted and “elongated” proportions (Panofsky 85), “flattened” and heterogeneous space, or “incorrect” use of perspective (Maquerlot 23-24). Though drawing parallels between literature and visual art is a tricky enterprise, parallels can and have been drawn. For the sake of coherence, the parallels between Shakespeare’s literary practices and other forms of Mannerist art will be provided in footnotes.

<sup>2</sup>For more on the subjugation of Italy and its effects, see Hauser 96-101 and Hocke 1991: 71-88.

into set, clearly defined figures.” (214) Nevertheless, the practice of slicing up the continuum of literary history into smaller and more manageable elements has proven both tenacious and useful to literary scholarship so long as it is recognized that all definitions are, by definition, hypothetical constructs.<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, our next step will be to provide a working definition of literary Mannerism.

Pavao Pavličić gives a comprehensive outline of Mannerist characteristics in literature in his book *Poetika manirizma* (1988). We will use his account as the basis for our own analysis. Pavličić claims that a common poetics connects various European authors of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. All Mannerist artists share

similar assumptions about the social function of literature (or similar dilemmas and difficulties in this respect), similar notions on what is valuable or beautiful in literature (or similar doubts about it) and a similar conception of the hierarchy of literary phenomena (or a similar need to alter or at least disturb the established hierarchy). (Pavličić 23)<sup>4</sup>

Mannerist literary works view their relationship with previous literary tradition, with extra-literary reality and with their own construction as *problematic*. This distinguishes them from the more consolidated and consolidating poetics of both the Renaissance and the Baroque.<sup>5</sup> As a result, literature takes itself as its own theme and elaborates on its own principles and procedures. This gives rise to three characteristics of Mannerist literary works:

1. The conscious manipulation of existing literary conventions in order to produce conceptual intricacy, often with an emphasis on contradiction
2. A pronounced interest in the relationship of fiction and reality, especially on the ambiguities which arise when a clearly non-fictional reality appears to behave according to fictional rules, or when a clearly non-real fictional creation appears as substantial as reality
3. The tendency of works to take either their own construction, or literary construction in general, as their *theme*, i.e. overt self-reflexivity

These characteristics reinforce one another, enabling authors to artistically handle “harmonies more complex and disturbing than foreseen” (Eco 215-216) which arise from their view of literature as problematic. They do not, however, provide a definitive solution to the problems that they delineate. It is important to stress that Mannerist poetics values a variety of solutions over consolidating into a single definitive way of solving problems. It is, first and foremost, “a poetics of question” (Pavličić 85).

Let us consider each of the aforementioned characteristics of Mannerism in more detail and illustrate them with examples from Shakespeare’s works.

---

<sup>3</sup>On the problems and the usefulness of literary periodization, see Ciglar-Žanić 11-43.

<sup>4</sup> All translations from Pavličić's book are mine.

<sup>5</sup>The problematic outlook is mentioned in Hauser 89-90 and Eco 216-225. For more on the differences between Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque, see Pavličić 1988: 11-37 and van Tuinen 2014: 166-190.

## Mannerist literature in relation to tradition: conventions and conceptual intricacy

The Renaissance conception of literature was more or less stable. Literary production was regulated by convention. The notion of convention is taken here in its broadest sense, according to the definition given in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*: an “established practice – whether in technique, style, structure, or subject matter – commonly adopted in literary works by customary and implicit agreement or precedent rather than by natural necessity.” (Baldick 50) For example, certain content called for a specific genre, which in turn proscribed appropriate themes, figures and metrical patterns. The conventions were derived from classical antiquity and gathered into a poetic system considered to be generally applicable. On the whole, Renaissance poetics is characterized by the affirmative imitation of classically established conventions.

During the sixteenth century, however, there is an acute awareness that imitating conventions is proving increasingly difficult without distorting or inverting them, followed by a growing uncertainty as to *which* conventions should be followed. On the other hand, it is still felt that works *should* be conventional, that is, that they should be placed in some kind of relation with tradition. As a result, authors are left to forge these relations on their own, and to forge them “not once and for all, but for each new work.” (Pavličić 60) This destabilization of the “hierarchy of traditional values” (59) results in a more conscious relationship with conventions and the awareness that conventional constraints are relative. Artists are now free to harness traditional conventions as poetic material.

In Mannerist literature, conventions still carry their traditional import, but their selection is determined and “con-figured” by the total conception of a particular literary work.<sup>6</sup> Without an extensive knowledge of conventions, Mannerist works cannot be properly understood, yet neither can they be understood simply by knowing the conventions. The trick is in figuring out the work's *difficoltà*, or its own “ingenious solution to self-imposed problems” (Maniates 1979: 12). Authors now decide which conventions to use and how. The more convoluted their choice of conventions and the more unusual their handling of them, the more skill it requires and the more wonder it incites.

Consider an example from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The lines of the lovers' first encounter together comprise a sonnet. The conventional Petrarchist connotations of the sonnet form are still operative – that is *why* it was chosen – but the same form is made to carry different or even contradictory connotations elsewhere in the play. In order to understand the work as a whole, the audience needs to be both acquainted with the conventions *and* attentive enough to register how they are transfigured at any particular moment. As Eco puts it, Mannerism “outstrip[s] and deepen[s] the Renaissance at one and the same time.” (222)

---

<sup>6</sup>In contemporary art theory, this total conception was known as the “internal design” (*disegno interno*), a term which denoted both “the hidden formal intricacy in the art object itself and [...] an intellectual scheme in the mind of the artist.” (Maniates 1979: 274)

By re-working conventions without completely breaking them, Mannerist works achieve striking conceptual intricacy. At its most extreme, this aesthetic ideal leads to works deliberately built on “the principle of disparity or dissonance or the systematic exploitation of incompatibilities.” (Maquerlot 24) For the sake of continuity, consider Shakespeare’s sonnet CXXX. It is built as a “proper” sonnet, but its basic concept is a “negation of the Petrarchist conventions of style and motif.” (Pavličić 17-18) The greatest conceptual intricacy often involves contradiction – the conventions are simultaneously affirmed *and* negated. Of course, such a *consciously anomalous* treatment of conventions demands that the author has *completely mastered* their appropriate use.

This practice of experimenting with conventions without breaking them is characteristic of Shakespeare’s entire opus. Although his plays are by and large revisions of existing narratives and dramatic conventions of his time, James J. Marino observes that Shakespeare’s revisions “are far more extensive and complicated than the routine patches, additions, and alterations perennially made to early modern plays.” (Marino 324) Whereas his contemporaries extend and revise “without any deliberate reconsideration of the whole,” Shakespeare’s revisions are so meticulously integrated into the older structure that they hardly seem revisions, while simultaneously being so methodically reimagined that the final artefact is infinitely more intricate than its original, allowing the play to exist at once as “an old landmark” and “a state-of-the-art creation” (Marino 325). Shakespeare needed to have had completely mastered conventions before he could rework them so subtly, yet so pervasively.

For our present purposes, it suffices to say that a prominent feature of literary Mannerism is *the conscious manipulation of conventions to produce conceptual intricacy*, often involving calculated contradiction and that this feature is visible in Shakespeare’s literary practice.

### **Mannerist literature in relation to reality: the fictional and the real**

Mannerist authors view reality and literature as very different. The world seems to “rarely comply to any rule, or if rules do exist, they are not obvious, but instead comprehended with great difficulty.” (Pavličić 67) <sup>7</sup> Literature, on the other hand, is still seen as regulated by conventions. In order to represent such a disordered world in such an orderly system, Mannerist artists resort, to use Wylie Sypher’s fittingly vague list, to “techniques of approximations and accommodations, double functions, inversions, techniques of ambiguity, and variable accents.” (Sypher 140) With the established relations between literature and reality

---

<sup>7</sup> Such a world view was in part a consequence of the vast changes which swept Europe during the 1400 and 1500s. The geographical and scientific discoveries of the age had far-ranging consequences for the European geopolitical and socio-economic make-up, as centres of commerce and power shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and new economic practices slowly chipped away at traditional social structures and cultural traditions. At the same time, the early Reformation’s insistence on the “inwardness, otherworldliness and uncompromising quality” of faith (Hauser 103) infused the spiritual sphere with uncertainty and the already volatile earthly sphere with religious violence. Hauser’s account of the socio-economic and cultural changes in the sixteenth century and their relations to art is the most extensive one, but others have also touched upon aspects of it. On geographical and scientific discoveries, see Eco 225 and Janson 482. On High Renaissance ideals, see Hauser 46-70. On the impact of the Reformation, see Hauser 103 and Janson 482-3.

disintegrating, literature becomes self-occupied and increasingly stylized – the conscious and more elaborate manipulation of conventions is a case in point. On the other hand, literature becomes anxious to reintegrate itself into reality. In literary works, this is represented by an increased interest in the relationship between fiction and reality. Of special interest are instances when fiction and reality, although clearly separate, prove difficult to distinguish, leading to an ambiguous relationship.

Mannerist literary works often contain two narrative levels: a level which can be called the “real” and a level which can be called the “fictional.” (Pavličić 64) The “fictional” level is overtly conventional, while the “real” level is overtly non-conventional, i.e. features prominent and deliberate distortions of conventions (67). Once their difference is firmly established, the two levels are “confronted, compared, mixed or conflicted.” (77) The greatest conceptual intricacy is achieved when the “non-fictional” (“real”) level plays or appears to play by fictional rules, or alternatively, when a clearly “unreal” (“fictional”) level appears as substantial as the “real” one.

The interplay of the fictional and the real is a popular theme in Elizabethan drama, usually represented by the device of the play within the play, or the inset play. Shakespeare uses the device in six of his plays.<sup>8</sup> As Replogle observes, an inset play is “more highly stylized than the body of the play in which it appear[s].” (Replogle 153) While, on the one hand, the “fictional” level of the play within the play is firmly separated from the “real” level of the play proper, the effect of the device is, paradoxically, to blur the boundaries between the two, since the play within the play always in some way “reflects” the play in which it appears. There is also another level to this interplay between fiction and reality: at its best, a play within a play “succeeds in converting actors of the main action into spectators, bound for the moment with the real audience. These actors thus acquire a kind of new actuality as, together with the audience, they inspect a performance which is equally remote from both.” (153)

There are other ways in which the ambiguities of the relationship between fiction and reality can be highlighted. The “fictional” level can intrude into the “real” one by way of *characters trying to interpret reality according to fictional rules*. (Pavličić 77) Hamlet’s attempt to ascertain Claudius’s guilt through the play within the play is an attempt to “master” reality through fiction, an attempt more successful than, for example, Don Quijote’s, perhaps the most famous instance of this.<sup>9</sup> A play within a play can also underscore the incompatibility of the “real” characters and the “fictional” world in which they find themselves, as in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Shakespeare uses “inset dramatic devices” in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Love’s Labour Lost*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. (Replogle 154)

<sup>9</sup>For more on Cervantes’s novel, see Hauser 135-6. Incidentally, Shakespeare would later use the story of Cardenio and Lucinda from *Don Quijote* in a lost collaborative play called *Cardenio* (c. 1612). (Shapiro 276).

<sup>10</sup>In *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the artisans try (and fail) to master literary conventions in their theatrical performance of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (see Pavličić 72). But the play also contains a “fictional” world that is equally “substantial” as the “real” one – the world of the fairies, where a very “real” Bottom is completely out of place. The two worlds are also firmly metrically distinguished: the fairies speak in trochaic tetrameter, while mortals speak in iambic pentameter.

In summary, Mannerist literature is concerned with *the relationship between fiction and reality*, and represents this relationship as *ambiguous* and *problematic*. Shakespeare frequently treats this problem in his plays.

### **Mannerist literature in relation to itself: self-reflexivity**

As a result of the increasing arbitrariness of literary conventions and the increasingly unclear purpose of literary production, literature becomes self-occupied. Therefore, while Mannerists exhibit a predilection for constructing complicated works on calculated contradiction on the one hand, they also share a preoccupation with self-analysis and self-explication on the other. Mannerist artefacts are highly self-reflexive, providing “in-sight into the processes of the art to which they pertain and into the artistry to which they owe their existence.” (Maquerlot 26-27) Pavličić emphasizes that self-reflexivity has many forms: works can, for example, deal with the author’s relation to his works (96-98), or with the concept of “literariness” by either explicitly evaluating conventions, alluding to other works, or taking their own construction as their theme (103-105) or with the audience’s reactions and interpretative abilities (109-110).

The authors’ increasing dependence on their own devices and the striving for an ever-more strained ingenuity does not mean that there is a lack of opinions about what literature is or should be. In fact, the uncertainties surrounding literature only exacerbate the need for a clear definition. A pertinent example is The Poet’s War of 1599-1602, which involved Jonson, Marston, Dekker and Shakespeare.<sup>11</sup> This poetic feud generated “much throwing about of brains” (*Hamlet* 2.ii.361) in regards to the ways of constructing and understanding plays and playwriting. These questions were not resolved so much as harnessed as dramatic material: playwrights investigated their own conception of playwriting and compared their own practices to those of their rivals *within the plays themselves*. In turn, this self-observing approach prompted modifications in their personal “traditions,” leading them to experiment with their craft in ever-more intricate ways.

In short, Mannerist literature is *self-reflexive, observing and questioning how it works, what it is capable of and what it is for*. Metatextuality ties in with an uncertainty about tradition: self-examination is superfluous if the rules are clear. Of course, works that investigate themselves as they move along contribute to their conceptual intricacy and further complicate the relationship between fiction and reality, since self-examination entails an awareness of fiction *as* fiction.

---

<sup>11</sup>Consider also the ferocious polemic between *gongorismo* (or *culteranismo*) and *conceptismo* in Spain: despite the shared striving for intricate verse and intriguing conception, the two were locked in a long literary feud. Gongorismo, named after Luis de Góngora, obscures meaning through inordinate use of archaisms and neologisms, syntactic disruptions and far-fetched metaphors, while conceptismo, advocated by Quevedo and Lope de Vega, combines formal conciseness and simplicity with conceptual complexity to express multiple meanings in as few words as possible. The amount of vitriol dripping from the quills of both parties illustrates the urgency of the need to find the “right way” of writing, as well as the inability of achieving a consensus.



## **MANNERISM IN *HAMLET***

The examples of Mannerist characteristics in Shakespeare's opus serve as a springboard for our main topic of discussion: Mannerist features in *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's most famous play has frequently been singled out as the most typically Mannerist of his works, but such designation was very general. This essay will follow the outline of Mannerist characteristics as provided by Pavličić and see if and to what extent they can be applied to *Hamlet*. First, we will look at some examples of Shakespeare's manipulation of common literary conventions to produce conceptual intricacy and contradiction. Secondly, we will investigate how the play constructs its "real" and "fictional" levels and how it compares and/or contrasts the two. Finally, we will look at instances of self-reflexivity in the play and consider their function.

### ***Tradition and innovation***

As an adaptation of an earlier play belonging to a popular and highly conventional genre of revenge plays, *Hamlet* is firmly embedded in Elizabethan theatrical tradition. As Ashley H. Thorndike shows in her extensive analysis *Hamlet* in relation to contemporary revenge plays, Shakespeare used "plot, motives, scenes, situations, and types and traits of character which not only in the main part belonged to the old *Hamlet*, but which were also for the most part familiar in other revenge plays." (220) However, when it was first performed, *Hamlet* "did not sound like anything playgoers had ever heard before and must at times have been taxing to follow." (Shapiro 286) One of the main reasons for this lies in the play's style. Shakespeare skilfully re-works conventions in anomalous or intricate ways to produce profound conceptual *difficoltà*. This part of the essay will look at two examples: Shakespeare's metrical experiments and his extensive use of conceits.<sup>12</sup>

### **That would be scanned: Shakespeare's verse**

The most fundamental element of Elizabethan drama is its metre. Unrhymed iambic pentameter first appeared in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (1562) and twenty years later formed the staple of drama. As M. A. Pangallo notes, "most early verse dramatists conformed their phrases to their lines; little effort was made to break free from the steady, weak-strong beat that arose as a result of matching end-stopped phrases and sentences to the regular decasyllabic line." (103) Such verse was used to great evocative effect: Marlowe "heightened the emotional pitch of his characters through the hammering force of ornate and polysyllabic words melded forcefully onto the iambic pulse of his blank verse" (103). However, there

---

<sup>12</sup>In addition to metre and figurative repertoire, the play also introduces 600 words which Shakespeare never used before, two thirds of which he will never use again, as well as 170 newly coined or employed words and phrases (Shapiro 286). Though these added to the play's novelty and conceptual intricacy, they will not be investigated in this essay.

After 1600, Shakespeare increasingly casts the conventional blank verse line into “structural doubt” by “late-line pauses and free enjambment [...] sentence that flows over the metrical margins; rushes of short-line exchanges that hover between verse and prose [and] brief and abrupt bursts of *staccato* phrases that [...] mock both line and phrase.” (Wright 1988: 223) He experiments with iambic rhythm, but never completely breaks the traditional pattern, which produces a sense of “metrical anxiety.” (106)<sup>13</sup>

Gertrude: This bodiless creation ecstasy is very cunning in.  
Hamlet: Ecstasy?  
My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time.  
(3.iv.138-140)

Especially interesting is Shakespeare's development of so-called "squinting lines," or lines split between two or more speakers. Note the following example:

(Wright 1988: 130)

<sup>13</sup>For a complete list of these departures, see Wright 1988: 105-106.

10

“mounted” on top of each other, almost certainly producing acoustic confusion (103). This is made more acute by the fact that, in the above example, (1)+(2)+(3) can make one pentameter line and (4)+(5) another, *or* (2)+(3)+(4) can make one line and (5)+(6) another. In performance, a half-line can therefore easily be mistaken for an independent short-line, or the second in a pair of half-lines can be answered by a third metrical match, making it difficult to pinpoint a full line. In such instances, especially in performance, “our very competence of hearing iambic pentameter is enabling us to deconstruct it, rendering it problematical.” (131) The proportion of shared lines to full lines in Shakespeare’s plays increases to 13.5% per play starting with *Hamlet* (119).

Another prominent feature of Shakespeare’s verse is increasing enjambment, which casts syntactical phrases out of joint with the metrical pattern: sentences start mid-line and pass into the next, forcing the listener to pay attention to two disparate things.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the language may also shift to prose, abandoning metrical constraints entirely (119):

King: Alas, alas!  
 Hamlet: A man may fish with the worm that hath eat  
 of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.  
 King: What dost thou mean by this?  
 Hamlet: Nothing, but to show you how a king may go  
 a progress through the guts of beggar.  
 (4.iii.28-30)

Claudius’s lines are iambic short-lines waiting to be answered, but Hamlet literally cuts them short by speaking in prose throughout the exchange.

Shakespeare’s short lines, either “isolate and anomalous” or “ready to combine with short lines preceding or following – or with both,” (Wright 1988: 122) along with his dislocations of phrase and meter in full lines and frequent interlacing of verse and prose, produce rhythmical effects similar to those of the “agitated, broken and unstable rhythms” of Mannerist pictorial composition (Smyth 79).<sup>16</sup>

The pentameter pattern is not the only thing which Shakespeare experiments with. Even bearing in mind the shifts in intonation and pronunciation separating Elizabethan and modern English, it is impossible to ignore the deliberate “syllabic ambiguity” of Shakespeare’s verse (Wright 1988: 150). Syllables are

---

sense in polyphony” (Meiburg 64). For more on musical experimentation and the interplay of music and text, see Hocke 1984: 156-74. We can mention, in passing, that Elizabethan England was home to one of the century’s most renowned groups of madrigalists (Janson 535).

<sup>15</sup>In his later plays, syntax itself becomes increasingly perplexing. As R. McDonald observes, Shakespeare vigorously omits syllables from words, discards verbs from sentences, eliminates conjunctions between clauses, dispenses with relative pronouns wherever possible, and collapses potentially lengthy clauses into participial or infinitive phrases [...] consequently plac[ing] intense pressure on those sounds and signs that remain and often transform[ing] the poetic surface [...] while also adding semantically unnecessary words, repeating syntactic structures, and reduplicating sounds, words and phrases to create a poetic texture that seems reiterative and incantatory (79).

<sup>16</sup>Parmigianino’s *La Madonna dal collo lungo* contains “several spaces construed according to different scales but linked together [...] by the use of false perspective.” (Maquerlot 23) In Tintoretto’s *The Abduction of the Body of Saint Mark* the perspectival scheme is consciously misapplied. In both these paintings, it is precisely the viewer’s familiarity with linear perspective that renders it problematical.

simultaneously elided and supplemented, the iambic rhythm inverted into trochaic, with the occasional appearance of the paradoxical “contrary stress” or “iambic trochee.”<sup>17</sup>

One of Hamlet’s most famous lines can serve as an example of both the addition and the elision of syllables:

Not so, my lord, I am too much i’ th’ sun (1.ii.67)

The line can be spoken in two ways: either by following the apostrophes and compressing “i’ th’” or by eliding a vowel in “I am.” (Wright 1988: 153) The reason for Shakespeare’s syllabic pruning, or conversely, for adding phonetic “extra tails and the enclitic half-syllable,” (158) is not to keep the rhythm smooth, but to pack more syllables elsewhere, cramming the line with more phonemes than it technically has room for and almost bursting the pattern.<sup>18</sup> In the example given above, the word “sun” bears the greatest prominence, being the centre of a conceit which has structural significance for the entire play, but it is impossible to fit the word into the regular metrical pattern without “distorting” it.

Take another of Hamlet’s famous lines:

What’s Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba (2.ii.562)

The technique of adding two unstressed syllables at the end allows Shakespeare to compress a conceptually intricate figure (antimetabole) in a minimum of space. As Wright notes, “to write ten syllable lines that have, in a sense, eleven or twelve syllables (or even eleven and a half) is to crowd the air with meanings only half-spoken, partly concealed.” (1988: 158) The figure emphasises the importance of the relationship between reality (player) and fiction (Hecuba), while the additional syllables acoustically suggest its ambiguous nature.

It is important to stress once again that even the most eccentric of Shakespeare’s prosodic inventions merely utilize the possibilities *already inherent* in the iambic pentameter. It is precisely because Shakespeare completely grasps the conventions that he can transform them so subtly, yet so radically, confirming his skill as a poet.<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare’s verse requires experienced listeners and exquisite performers to appreciate its virtuosity.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>For more on iambic trochees, see Wright 1988: 203-6.

<sup>18</sup>A musical counterpart can again be discerned in contemporary experiments with chromatics, in which “modal stability [is] vitiated by chromatic sonorities.” (Maniates 1971: 285) The Mannerist over-crowding of pictorial space, or their tendency to “constrict” energetic figures in narrow spaces, are analogous techniques in contemporary painting.

<sup>19</sup>The only poet comparable to Shakespeare in this regard is John Donne. Wright writes that [Shakespeare and Donne’s] success in fashioning such a [complex and problematical iambic pentameter] for their different sorts of poetry is almost without precedent or comparison. Few later poets have tried to push the form to its limits, to exercise lavishly some of the options that obscure its status as a meter and emphasize its nearness to speech: the occasional extra syllable, syllabic ambiguity, level stress, a high degree of enjambment and segmentation, and so on [...] the arts of Donne and the later dramatic Shakespeare could only survive as eccentric versions [...] (Wright 1988: 273).

<sup>20</sup>Virtuosity of execution and refined sensibility in both audience and artists is mentioned in Maniates (1971: 286), Wright (1988: 107) and McDonald (84).

Finally, we should note one other effect of these metrical distortions. Verse is always a signal of artificial, as opposed to regular, speech. The iambic pentameter of Marlowe and Kyd sounds “exciting and impassioned,” but also “strange and unnatural,” since it “flatly declares its status as verse” (Pangallo 105). By modifying the traditional patterns of iambic pentameter to approach regular speech, Shakespeare blurs the line between “literary” (fictional) and “real” speaking, introducing conceptual intricacy at the most basic level of his craft.

### Crafty madness: the conceit

The Elizabethans conceived the writing of verse as “numbering.” Meter, therefore, included the concept of proper proportion. Paula Blank provides evidence of contemporary literary treatises advocating not only metrical, but figurative “numerositie,” or the adherence to the “proper proportions” of words and ideas (Blank 44). For Shakespeare, however, the notion of proportion is problematic. Instead of ‘true’ proportions, Blank argues, “Shakespeare imagines unsettled, unstable and uncertain relations among the parts of his created works.” (Blank 42-43) Relational instability and improper proportions are the hallmark of one of the most recognizable stylistic features of sixteenth-century literature – the conceit (*conchetto*).

The conceit can be broadly defined as *an intricate comparison of disparate or contradictory images or ideas, often extended over poetic passages or entire works*. Initially derived from Petrarch’s more abstruse metaphors, the conceit subsequently grew in both internal complexity and overall structural importance. In English literature, the most famous examples are the so-called metaphysical conceits associated with John Donne (1573-1631) and his followers, but conceits are pervasive in Elizabethan poetry. Shakespeare’s work abounds in conceits, from the filigree wordplay of his poems and early plays to the late plays’ abundance of “contradictory abstractions” and “comparisons so frail they muddle rather than clarify” (Braunmuller 48).

The basis of the conceit is a far-fetched metaphor, around which is built an elaborate, often consciously fallacious, argument.<sup>21</sup> In her book *Domišljato stvoren svijet: barok u engleskoj književnosti*, Janja Ciglar-Žanić divides conceits into three main categories: figural schemes, figures of syntactic order and acoustic conceits (puns). Whatever shape they take, all conceits provide an ingenious conceptual solution which is able to hold together mutually incongruous elements. In puns, “the oscillation between complete acoustic sameness on one side, and simultaneous semantic difference on the other, [...] create[s] especially pregnant forms of semantic ambiguity and ingenious play of sense” (Ciglar-Žanić 215).<sup>22</sup> The most successful conceits are not only a source of amazement and delight, but a way to “redefine our conception of experience and so reality itself” (Cousins 100).

Puns would have been especially prominent in theatrical performance, as they would be more immediately

---

<sup>21</sup>For more concrete examples, see Hocke 1984: 52-3, 115-122.

<sup>22</sup>All translations from Ciglar-Žanić’s book are mine.

registered and comprehended than syntactic figures or figural schemes, both of which are more easily apprehended on the page. We will now look at some examples of puns in *Hamlet*. As J. Dover Wilson observes in his introduction to *Hamlet*, for the first four acts at least, the main conflict is a “spectacle of two extraordinarily subtle men engaged in a deadly duel of wits.” (xxiv) In this verbal conflict, the conceit is the ultimate weapon:

Claudius: But now my cousin Hamlet, and my son –  
Hamlet: A little more than kin and less than kind.  
Claudius: How is it that the clouds still hang on you?  
Hamlet: Not so my lord; I am too much in the sun.  
(1.ii.64-67)

Claudius’s speech throughout this scene is “a succession of subordinate unnatural unions made smooth by rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and syntactical balance” (Booth 333), ending with the phrase “my cousin... and my son.” Hamlet unbalances this carefully constructed rhetorical edifice with a single line, which *imitates* Claudius’s style but *dis-unifies* ideas. His counter-line can be properly understood only *in comparison to the thing it contradicts*. Grammatically, the sentence is also a comparison in which the acoustic similarity of *kin-kind* is paired with the contrast implied in *more-less*. The mechanism of comparing contradictory elements is essential to the interpretation of the passage. Moreover, if we bear in mind Booth’s claim that the entire play is structured on the principle by which “what interrupts the order, threatens coherence, and is strikingly at odds with its preamble is also a continuation by echo of what went before,” (334) this mechanism is also the structuring principle of the entire work.

Claudius and Hamlet’s styles are a reflection of their characters. Hamlet’s habit of “separating [...] other’s words from their conventional meanings” (Ferguson 254) reflects his anxieties about the disparity between appearance and reality, whereas Claudius’s verbal levelling by means of isocolons and oximora at once conceals (to the court) and reveals (to the audience) his “fraudulent and malicious intent beneath the linguistic surface.” (Keller 150) Hamlet’s method of contradicting harmony strives to expose the truth, while Claudius’s harmonizing of contraries strives to hide it – what connects them is the penchant for intricate and contradictory expression.

The fact that Hamlet both *dismantles* and *repeats* Claudius’s speech can be connected with the play’s central concept of revenge. In order to revenge his father, Hamlet is essentially forced to *repeat* Claudius’s act of killing his king and his kin. Through the act of murder, Hamlet is indeed “more than kin” to Claudius, he is *like* Claudius. And because he must kill Claudius, Hamlet is indeed “less than kind” to him. The syntactic teeter-totter of *more-less* could be read as Hamlet’s recognizing and mocking Claudius’s shiftiness, but it could also be read as a poetic expression of their entire relationship as adversaries who are alike. However, Hamlet’s act of revenge is *not* a repetition at all. While Hamlet’s killing of Claudius walks like vengeance and talks like vengeance, it is *not* the result of Hamlet’s cunning, like it was with

Claudius's murder of old Hamlet, but a back-firing of Claudius's plan. Moreover, Hamlet kills his father's murderer not because his father was murdered, but because he himself is about to die, which, while it might count as vengeance, is not the vengeance driving the entire play.

The central element of the conceit is the *sun-son* pun. Acoustic similarity only emphasizes the disparate vowels separating the two concepts. Notice that the first (*son*) is provided by Claudius and the second (*sun*) by Hamlet, emphasising that the two, like *kin* and *kind*, are similar, yet incompatible. The pun taps into the main thematic thread of the entire play. Hamlet's family drama is also a political one, exploring the rottenness of a usurped state. Traditionally, the sun functioned as the symbol for the king. Therefore, when Hamlet declares that he is too much in the sun, he is implying that he is too much his father's son, thus rejecting Claudius's attempt to verbally adopt him by twisting Claudius's own words. However, this declaration of identity is problematic.

If the *more-less* construction reflected Hamlet's relationship with Claudius, his assertion that he is "*too much* in the sun" reflects his relationship towards his father. Hamlet's role as the avenger is motivated by the fact that Hamlet is the son of the "sun," i.e. the king. However, the ghost of Old Hamlet, the late Denmark's "sun," is incapable of being too much in the sun, instead fleeing as soon as he "scent[s] the morning air." (1.v.58) Being the son of such a "sun" is therefore *incompatible* with being in the sun, unless if to be in the sun means, paradoxically, to be in darkness. The business of revenge is dark. Hamlet's hesitation is contrasted within the play with several figures of avenging sons – Phyrrus, Fortinbras and Laertes – all of which are morally questionable at best and beastly at worst. Furthermore, revenge ultimately leads to the deaths of all the major characters in the play and the throne of Denmark fallen to a foreign ruler.

Shakespeare takes the conventional association of the king and the sun and designs a poetic context in which the metaphor gains a profound conceptual intricacy and interpretive ambivalence.

The image of the sun is repeated in a different scene, where it takes on a different set of connotations:

Hamlet	For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion... Have you a daughter?
Polonius	I have, my lord.
Hamlet	Let her not walk <i>i' th' sun</i> : conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend look to't.

(H 2.ii.173-86, emphasis mine)

John E. Hankins interprets the image of the sun breeding maggots in a dead dog in connection with a widely circulated theory of the generation of life derived from classical authorities like Aristotle. In a nutshell, the Elizabethan theory of the generation of life claims that

all life proceeds from corruption, the necessary beginning of generation. The mysterious process of conception in the mother's womb is the same in kind as the sprouting of a plant from the decay of its seed, the breeding of a chick from the decay of its egg, the breeding of maggots in a dead dog

from the decay of its flesh. (Hankins 511)

A conventional idea of the sun as a giver of life is made to carry increasingly convoluted meanings in the context of the passage and the play as a whole. The words *conception* and *conceive* denote both pregnancy and intellect, but whereas pregnancy *requires* putrefaction in order to create life, Hamlet's intellect rejects such natural corruption to the point of advocating suicide and ending marriages. The same word is, therefore, made to carry two contradictory attitudes towards existence. Hamlet's disdain towards decay and propagation is evidenced in his condemning of Ophelia as a "breeder of sinners" (3.i.122) as well as his more general musings on the earth as a "garden" possessed entirely by "things rank and gross." (1.ii.135-6) Connecting this with the conceit in 1.ii., Hamlet, being too much in the sun, or too much the sun's son, is most likely to be corrupted and to corrupt. Accepting the interpretation of the dead dog as a reference to Ophelia confirms this: it is Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia and the killing of her father that causes her madness and death – Hamlet "breeds maggots" in Ophelia both psychologically and physically. Conversely, the cause of Ophelia's corruption might be in her own excessive filial obedience. Just like Hamlet is too much a son, she is too much a daughter. The phrase "let her not walk i' t' sun" echoes the conceit of 1.ii., drawing a parallel between Hamlet and Ophelia, their madness and their relationship with their fathers. Once again, the conventional image of the sun (and, by extension, of king and father) is given sinister undertones which complicate the meaning. Like with the conceit in 1.ii., Shakespeare takes a conventional metaphor and designs a context in which the idea becomes conceptually intricate. The word *conceive* connotes, on the one hand, a pregnant (corrupted) body, and, on the other, an (purely) intellectual act. In this miniature conceptual design, the idea of conceiving simultaneously carries two mutually contradictory meanings. The passage is a poetic "outline" of the relationship between the two characters, Hamlet and Ophelia, as well as a conceptual nexus which gathers the themes of life, death, corruption, comprehension, kingship and kinship in a complicated and contradictory semantic structure.

Another conceit dealing with the idea of kingship occurs in 2.ii:

Guildenstern: [...] dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is  
merely a shadow of a dream.  
Hamlet: A dream itself is but a shadow.  
Rosencrantz: Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but  
a shadow's shadow.  
Hamlet: Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs, and outstretched heroes, the  
beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? For, by my fay, I cannot reason.

(H 2.ii.258-268)

The metaphor of casting shadows forms the basis for the exchange. On the one hand, casting shadows is seen as the physical property of compact bodies and, on the other, as a metaphor for ambition. The reference to bodies and monarchs would surely remind the Elizabethans of the conventional metaphor of



the state as a body and of the king's "two bodies" (the physical and the symbolic), but Hamlet does not use the metaphor conventionally.<sup>23</sup> Instead, he short-circuits it by using Rosencrantz's conceptual short-circuit (which is already a conceit) of ambition as "a shadow's shadow" and concludes that unambitious beggars are more "compact" than monarchs. By making the two meanings of "casting shadows" *contradict each other*, the conceit turns the established conception of social hierarchy on its head. Of course, the conceit is Hamlet's oblique comment on Claudius's rule. The same connection between bodies and kings will be repeated in 4.ii., again in a conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

Rosencrantz: My lord, you must tell us where the  
body is, and go with us to the king.  
Hamlet: The body is with the king, but the king is  
not with the body. The king is a thing –  
Guildenstern: A thing, my lord!  
Hamlet: Of nothing, bring me to him. [...]  
(4.ii.24-29)

It was Claudius's ambition which turned a king into a thing of nothing. The conceit refers to two things. Firstly, Claudius turned old Hamlet, the rightful king, into a ghost, literally a shadow or a fittingly contradictory "thing of nothing." Secondly, Claudius rule is illegitimate, equally a thing of nothing. The legitimate king no longer has a body, while the body which usurped his place is not the rightful king. On top of that, the context of the scene adds another conceptual layer. The scene centres on the search for Polonius's body. By stating that the body and the king are separate, Hamlet is also referring back to his mistaking of Polonius for Claudius. The body *should* have been with the king, but was not.

The examples given above are only a small sample of conceits which permeate *Hamlet*. As we have seen, they are complicated on their own: puns enable a number of possible meanings within the minimum of space, meanings which are often mutually contradictory. But the conceits provide thematic coherence while also gaining in complexity by repetition in different contexts. To quote Jonathan Culler, puns represent "a structural, connecting device that delineates action or explores the world, helping the plays [...] to offer the mind a sense and an experience of *an order that it does not master or comprehend*." (8)

The far-fetched comparison which underpins the conceit can thus be regarded as the main principle behind the overall structuring the play. In this, *Hamlet* is no different than other contemporary plays. Elizabethan theatre did not accept the classical unities of space, time and action. Instead, according to M. C. Bradbrook, playwrights achieved a "poetic" unification of their plays by "leaving out the interconnections between different kinds of material [...] in the fashion which allows the interrelation of things normally separated" (38). Imagery and phrasing introduced in one scene would reappear in another scene which differed in content or tone, and the comparison of the two instances produced conceptual intricacy through

---

<sup>23</sup>For more on the metaphor of the state as the body, and of the king's two bodies, see Fisher-Lichte 55-56.

the contextual transmutation of ideas, simultaneously complicating the work and providing coherence. Conceits enable an artistic mastering of an incomprehensible reality, while at the same time intensifying the inexplicability by offering a conceptual intricacy which resists a singular interpretation. As such, they are only a hop, skip and a jump away from aberration and disorder. It is no wonder that Hamlet, the character whose circumstances and course of thought has maddened critics of all ages, is Shakespeare's "most brilliant wielder of language" (Teskey 12). On the other hand, conceits could foreground not the incomprehensibility of reality, but the inherent instability of *language*. Shakespeare's contemporaries were aware that language was not, or was no longer, a stable and transparent guide through reality, but a shift and opaque substance capable of distorting or even precluding comprehension.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to say whether it is the instability of language that makes reality *appear* unstable, or whether reality has become so uncertain that language can no longer reflect it without resorting to distortion. Just as with bringing of the iambic pentameter pattern closer to the rhythms of regular speech, the linguistic instability inherent in the conceit serves to underline the fact that the boundary between what is "literary" (or "fictional") and what is "real" is deceptive. This problem of the relationship between reality and its expression in (literary) language brings us to our second point of discussion: the relationship between reality and fiction.

### ***By indirections find directions out: the fictional and the real***

Shakespeare's ingenious use of meter and figurative repertoire, as we have seen in the examples above, enables *Hamlet* to achieve incredible interpretive complexity. But interpretive complexity is not an end in itself, a superficial way to dazzle the audience. Jean-Pierre Maquerlot argues that, in the course of his career, Shakespeare moves from the "systematic oppositions, see-saw structures and term-to-term correspondences" of his earlier plays into a discourse more fitting for "ambiguous situation, equivocal discourse and ambivalent behaviour." (65) The stylistic intricacies in *Hamlet* are instrumental in understanding the dramatic world constructed in the play. Elsinore is a dismaying and inscrutable place: the dead walk the ramparts of the castle while, inside, murder, intrigue and madness ran rampant behind a thin veneer of courtly elegance. Furthermore, the play is preoccupied with the relationship between such a reality and works of fiction which are found in it. The unsettling "real" world of Elsinore is contrasted and compared with two highly stylized and carefully controlled "fictions," the Player's speech and the *Murder of Gonzago*. The comparison reveals an ambiguous relationship: fiction can appear more substantial than reality and reality seems to coincide with fiction.

### **Wild and whirling words: hendiadys**

---

<sup>24</sup>On the general stance on language in Elizabethan England, see Mahood 169-188. On Shakespeare's stance, see McDonald 106-108.

There is another stylistic choice which is crucial in understanding how *Hamlet* constructs its dramatic world. The figure of hendiadys (Greek: “one through two”) is defined as the use of “two substantives, joined by a conjunction [...] to express a single but complex idea.” (Wright 1981: 168) It is exceptionally rare in English literature: almost no English writer used it before or after Shakespeare (Shapiro 287). According to Wright, about 70% of all hendiadys in Shakespeare’s plays is found in plays written between 1599 and 1606, with *Hamlet* containing twice as much as any other play – 66 in total. (1981: 173)<sup>25</sup> How does one account for this abundance of hendiadys in *Hamlet*?

Let us start by looking at how hendiadys works. Some of the most famous examples of the device come from Virgil. Wright cites *pateris libamus et auro* (*Georgics* 2.192: “we drink from cups and gold”) and *membris et mole valens* (*Aeneid* 5.431: “powerful in limbs and weight”) (1981: 168). While at first sight the phrases could be aptly paraphrased as “we drink from golden cups” and “powerful of limbs,” a second glance causes confusion. “Gold” could be substituted with “golden” if we squint, but then why represent it as *separate* from “cups”? And if “weight” refers to the entire body, why single out “limbs”? The source of the confusion is the centre of hendiadys – the conjunction *and*. Normally, Wright postulates, conjunctions function in sentences the way coordinates function in spatial orientation: they are “our major instruments for ordering the world we live in; in turn, we rely on them for reassurance about the way the world is structured.” (1981: 169) Accordingly, “we expect a conjunction like *and* to join together entities that are not only grammatically but conceptually assimilable.” (170) However, this is precisely what is avoided by using hendiadys.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the figure conveys a “dual perception of a dual phenomenon” – the conjunction underscores “the separateness and successiveness of the two distinct segments of the event.” (170) The concepts are never quite compatible, yet the presence of a conjunction *still assumes* a connection. Because of this, hendiadys is a paradoxical device.

Another way to look at hendiadys is as a special form of doubling. According to Ruth Stevenson, doubling serves several functions in *Hamlet*. On the one hand, the transformation and deformation of concepts resembles the process of the mental crafting and refining of a thought into an ever more intricate structure, but, on the other, it also “illustrate[s] repeatedly the elusiveness of absolute balance and the tendency of words to tilt and then fall or flow into differentiation and change.” (443) It is difficult to ascertain the “proportions” of ideas in hendiadys: one concept can be understood as subordinated to the other, but the exact nature or extent of the subordination is problematic. Furthermore, Stevenson notes that “twoness” neither resolves itself into oneness nor develops into “threeness,” but rather accentuates “arrest and

<sup>25</sup> I refer to Wright’s article for an abundance of examples of hendiadys in *Hamlet*.

<sup>26</sup> Hendiadys works on the principle of addition and not subordination. Parallels can be made with principles of Mannerist spatial composition, which often juxtaposes several spatial segments without unification, rendering oppositional pairs like centre/margin and foreground/background problematic. In contrast, classical linear perspective “subordinates” spatial segments to a central point according to a pre-existing mathematical grid. In Mannerist compositions, this central point is often left empty or the object that occupies it is in some way unsuited to the task.

frustration,” and the “bleakness of the play derives in part from this *pattern of expansion that becomes thwarted or constricted*, and even more in the simultaneity and fusion of the one-two pattern.” (443, emphasis mine) Hendiadys gives both a sense that anything can change *and* that nothing can move.<sup>27</sup>

All major characters in *Hamlet* use hendiadys. Such ubiquity shows that the duality of perception that hendiadys helps to convey is not a peculiarity of a particular character, but *a constant of the dramatic world itself*. Wright argues that the principle of “deceptive linking” behind hendiadys is perfectly suited to the dramatic world as it is constructed in *Hamlet*, where “dualisms of one kind or another [prove] to be misleading, unions to be false or unsteady, and conjunctions of persons or events or objects to mask deeper disjunction.” (1981: 178) As already stated, Mannerist works often represent the world either as unknowable or guided by obscure laws. *Hamlet’s* Denmark, in which characters are paralysed both by their “circumstance and [...] course of thought” (3.iii.83) and where even the most fundamental polarities like life and death crumble into one another, accords with this definition of reality as unpredictable and confusing and hendiadys is the perfect verbal instrument for representing it.

### **Purposes mistook: dislocated scenes and deflected attention**

While hendiadys does help to convey the disorientation and incomprehensibility that are the staples of the dramatic world of *Hamlet*, it is still a single figure of speech. We need to look at higher structural levels in order to support our claims. To do so, we turn to the play's scene organization. We will look both at the internal structure of individual scenes and to their sequential arrangement. The play's scene architectonics supports the argument that the play constructs its reality as confusing and inscrutable. Furthermore, the principles behind the scenic organization are similar to those behind hendiadys.

The play opens with two sentries meeting on a platform in the dead of night. Barnardo asks who is there and Francisco demands that Barnardo unfold himself first. This seems like normal sentinel routine, but the question is asked by the wrong person: Barnardo *should know* who is on duty, since he has come to replace Francisco. The sense of unease is established with Francisco saying he is “sick at heart” despite “not a mouse stirring” during his watch (1.i.8-10), but the source of Francisco’s malaise is delayed as Francisco disappears from the play altogether and Horatio and Marcellus appear. Horatio's line “Has this thing appeared again to-night?” (1.i.21) takes up where Francisco and Barnardo’s initial dread left off, but again leaves the “thing” obscure. As Barnardo begins to tell of his previous encounter with “the dreaded sight twice seen” (1.i.25), the audience is teased further with what promises to be a lengthy explanation. As if trapped in his story, Barnardo takes three lines to arrive to the subject of his sentence and then takes

---

<sup>27</sup>One could say that Mannerist reluctance between tradition and innovation itself works on this principle of thwarted expansion and the resulting conceptual complexity. It can be seen in the cramming of pentameter lines with syllables, musical phrases with tones, pictorial compositions with too many figures, or figures themselves with mutually contradictory gestural intentions.

another “parenthetical delay” before the verb (Booth 60). By now, the audience may very well feel sick at heart to get to the bottom of the whole thing. Then, before Barnardo can even finish his sentence, the ghost appears. As Booth observes, “the description [of the action] is interrupted by a repetition of the action described.” (60) It is as if the play suddenly shifts gears, going from impishly delaying to frantically tripping over itself. The scene establishes a narrative progression characterized by *delay* and *interruption* as well as a consequent *uncertainty*, which will continue throughout the play. Maynard Mack points out that the opening scene is riddled with questions, hints and guesses (47).<sup>28</sup> Characters are unsure about their own abilities of sight and insight: they doubt whether they really see a ghost and, when it appears, wonder about its nature and meaning. The reality constructed in the play is neither easily apprehended nor comprehended.

After the ghost’s second disappearance, the scene once again seems to revert to delaying by turning into a meandering discussion of irrelevancies, which, incidentally, includes an interruption: Horatio speaks of ghosts’ fear of cock-crows, Marcellus interrupts him with a comment on the relationship between cocks and Christmas, and Horatio rounds it off by acknowledging the time of day (*H* 1.i.149-165). Though the passages are connected by motifs like “cocks, spirits, sunrise, the presence or absence of speech,” (Booth 63) these seem only tangentially relevant to a dead king’s ghostly apparition in the middle of the night amidst war preparations. As Booth observes,

[w]atching and comprehending the scene is an intellectual triumph for its audience. From sentence to sentence, from event to event, as the scene goes on *it makes the mind of its audience capable of containing materials that seem always about to fly apart*. The scene gives its audience a temporary and modest but real experience of being a superhumanly capable mental athlete. The whole play is like that. (63, emphasis mine)<sup>29</sup>

Both thematically and structurally, the opening scene emphasizes unpredictability and confusion. Incidentally, the ghost will appear *twice* in the scene, just as he has supposedly already appeared twice before the play even started. This sets up another pattern which continues throughout the play. As Cherrell Guilfoyle shows, events and actions in the play are often repeated twice (Guilfoyle 299): the action in the play within the play, which is itself a glaring example of doubling, is given first in silence and then in speech. Hamlet twice enters a lady’s closet, once in silence and once “speaking daggers.” (3.ii.399) Polonius stages an encounter between Hamlet and a woman twice and eavesdrops on both occasions. While “*divided* from herself and her fair judgement,” (4.v.84, emphasis mine; note the hendiadys) Ophelia,

---

<sup>28</sup>Mack registers the instances of questioning and hearsay: “Bernardo?” “Have you had quiet guard?” “Who hath reliev’d you?” “What, is Horatio here?” “What, has this thing appear’d again tonight?” “Looks ‘a not like the king?” “How now, Horatio!... Is not this something more than fantasy? What think you on’t?” “Is it not like the king?” “Why this same strict and most observant watch...?” “Shall I strike at it with my partisan?” “Do you consent we shall acquaint (young Hamlet) with it?” “At least, the whisper goes so” “I think it be no other e’en so” “I have heard” that on the crowing of the cock “Th’ extravagant and erring spirit hies To his confine” “Some say” at Christmas time “this bird of dawning” sings all night, “And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad.” “So have I heard, and do in part believe it.” (47-48)

<sup>29</sup>For more on Shakespeare’s testing of the mental acuity of his audience, especially in later plays, see McDonald 104-106.

like the ghost, enters the same scene twice. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern double each other and are ordered by Claudius to “pluck the heart of [Hamlet’s] mystery” (3.ii.368-9) twice; Fortinbras leads a war campaign twice; Hamlet and Claudius are both inwardly divided and both try to murder each other twice. The parallels between these events are suggested, but their logic is uncertain. Coherence rests on the numerical interweaving of one and two, either through the yoking together of opposites or the dis-joining of a perceived unity.<sup>30</sup>

The principle of doubling operates on the level of individual scenes as well. The opening scene ends with Horatio’s decision to inform Hamlet of the ghost and the audience expects that Hamlet will appear in the second scene. He does, but the central figure of 1.ii. is not the protagonist, but the villain. Claudius’s behaviour in the scene may be described as double because his speech which draws “unnatural connections between moral contraries” (Booth 65) contradicts his social position as king, the centre of stately order, stability and *unity*. When Hamlet finally comes into focus, he is, as far as stage position goes, on the margins. The play presents a “kind of *double understanding in double frames of reference*,” with “the particulars of the scene [making] Claudius the focal figure, [while] the genre and the particulars of a given performance focus the audience’s attention on Hamlet” (65-6, emphasis mine). S. X. Mead argues that there is no “physical centrality” to *Hamlet*, noting that even the soliloquies “make better stage sense when delivered from the margins of the stage” (Mead 253). The insistence on a duality organized around a prominently “empty” centre is reminiscent of the mechanics of hendiadys.

The series of events between 2.ii. and 3.i. contains a continuous disparity between plot structure and scenic organisation. As Maquerlot points out, the sequence actually combines *two separate clusters* of episodes, one revolving around Hamlet’s interactions with Polonius and Ophelia, the other around his interactions with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (95). Plot-wise, one cluster logically follows the other and the sequence can be outlined as follows:

- (1) Polonius gives his report to the king and queen, concluding that Hamlet is a lover gone mad
- (2) Polonius offers to prove this by staging an encounter between Ophelia and Hamlet
- (3) The nunnery scene
- (4) Claudius asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to interrogate Hamlet
- (5) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern interrogate Hamlet
- (6) The players arrive and Hamlet decides to trap the king with a play
- (7) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern report their failure to Claudius
- (8) The Mousetrap is performed

The scenic sequence is respected in the First Quarto, but not in the Second. The first scene in Q2 is the King instructing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to question Hamlet (4), followed by Polonius offering his mad lover theory (1) and proposing to use Ophelia to prove it (2). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern then interrogate Hamlet (5), get interrupted by the players (6) and come back to report their failure and

---

<sup>30</sup>For more on the symbolism of the number two and duality in *Hamlet*, see Guilfoyle 297-8; 302; 307.

announce the players' arrival (7). The nunnery scene (3), along with the "to be or not to be" soliloquy, is squeezed in before the play can be held (8). Susan Snyder calls this principle "deflection," and defines it as "a method whereby discontinuity is introduced into a given sequence of events to create a hiatus between cause and effect, beginning and completion [so that] duration is splintered into a succession of instants and instantaneousness enhanced at the expense of the passing of time" (94). Similar deflections occur throughout the play, as "the audience gets information or sees action it once wanted only after a new interest has superseded the old" (Booth 330). While such compositional delays and interruptions can be justified by the play's need to compress its variegated materials due to the temporal limits of performance, they also show that time is literally "out of joint" (1.v.189). The principle of discontinuity and the emphasizing of *successive events as separate* also remind us of the mechanics of hendiadys.

Moreover, the incongruities in *Hamlet's* scenic organization seem *deliberately structured to mislead*. The audience enters Act 2 accepting that Hamlet is feigning madness because Hamlet *says so* in 1.v. Therefore, Polonius's theory about him being a dejected lover gone mad is obviously wrong and the audience enjoys Hamlet's toying with the old servant. And then, in 3.ii, Hamlet appears "suddenly, inexplicably, violently, and really mad" (Booth 339). Yet, the play hardly skips a beat, for, as Booth observes, "the King sums up the results of the Ophelia experiment as if they were exactly what the audience expected they would be (which is exactly what they were not) [...]" In the next scene, Hamlet enters perfectly sane, and lecturing, oddly enough, on what a play should be" (340). The play, in short, tells the audience how it should have reacted, which is usually the opposite of the actual reaction, but the actual reaction was prepared *by the play itself*. It becomes impossible to predict what comes next. With every new occurrence, the audience finds itself slightly off-kilter, left to repeat "what's there?" just as the soldiers wondered who is there at the very beginning. The final act gives no respite. As Teskey remarks, Hamlet dies in "the thick of much interruption and confusion, where the causes of action are not linear, as in classical tragedy, but reticulated [...] so that plot events occurring in one place are entangled at a distance with others" (14). In fact, so many strands are packed into its final moments that Hamlet can scarcely finish his final speech.<sup>31</sup>

Immediately after the protagonist's death, the audience is granted what B. M. Cohen describes as the play's prologue "oddly stuck on at the end" (96):

[...] let me speak to th'yet unknowing world  
How these things came about; so shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,  
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fall'n on their inventor's heads: all this can I  
Truly deliver.

---

<sup>31</sup>For a more detailed analysis of the exquisite chaos that is *Hamlet's* final scene, see Teskey 14-17.

Of course, Horatio truly delivers nothing, because the play ends. The phrase *purposes mistook* can be applied to Horatio's speech as well as to the general aim of the entire plot, which is not only filled with misunderstandings, but constantly and deliberately defies the audience's expectations. Scenes avoid a clear centre of attention, mysteriously double other disparate scenes, or deliberately contradict those that immediately precede them.

The lack of a logical causal progression in the plot drives home the idea that the reality constructed in *Hamlet* is governed by strange rules and "irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains" (Keller 152).

### To be or not to be, or both: chiasmus

For our present purposes, it can be established that the reality constructed in the play is purposefully inscrutable and often deliberately misleading. But, as has been previously noted, what distinguishes Mannerist literary works is not simply that they construct reality as inscrutable and disordered, but that they are especially interested in the relationship between reality and fiction, which, although they are clearly separate, can be compared or conflated. One of the ways in which this is achieved is by having characters interpret their reality by using literary (or, more broadly, fictional) rules.

In order to show this, we will look at the beginning of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy in 3.i. As E. P. Levy points out, the speech follows the pattern of the scholastic *quaestio*, structured around "the opposition of one opinion [...] against another [...] in the movement toward a solution" (68). The traditional aim of the *quaestio* is to resolve contradictions through a rigorous analysis of carefully defined concepts and an elaboration of *pro* and *contra* arguments. Hamlet's soliloquy is an investigation into the value of suicide, which rests on the weighing of the numerous hardships of life against the unknown horrors of death's "undiscovered country" (H 3.i.79) in an attempt to decide which is worse: life or death. The fact that Hamlet uses this traditional tool for clarification reflects, by contrast, the level of Hamlet's confusion with his own reality. There would be no need for clarification of such fundamental concepts as life and death if the rules of the world were clear. However, while Hamlet's reasoning *appears* logically consistent, the speech is an exercise in conceptual contradiction. Hamlet's entire reasoning hinges on a poetic cliché – the comparison of death to sleep. Throughout the speech, the binary modes of rational understanding are undermined by the mode of the metaphor. According to Levy, this is the dynamic behind Hamlet's thinking throughout the entire play: his understanding shifts from a binary "either or" to a metaphorical "both and" perspective, but "the shift from one scheme to the other is neither definitive nor explicit, with the result that the two tend to interpenetrate each other generating the pairs of opposition which paradoxically negate the notion of contradiction, while retaining the emphasis on bipolarity" (101). Death is not *really* like



sleep, but it can be in the sphere *literary fiction*. The soliloqui registers the difficulties Hamlet has in orienting himself in his world, but also shows his attempts to find his way by relying on literary conventions, i.e. viewing reality *as if* it were fiction. However, the soliloqui also registers how this resorting to fiction in order to gain clarification paradoxically leads to more confusion.

In order to facilitate the analysis, we will start with the overall compositional pattern of the speech. The speech is structured according to a compositional pattern known as complex chiasmus, which Shakespeare utilizes often (Davis 239). Traditionally, chiasmus is “a figure of speech by which the order of the terms in the first two parallel clauses is reversed in the second. This may involve a repetition of the same words [...] in which case the figure may be classified as antimetabole, or just a reverse parallel between the two corresponding pairs of ideas” (Baldick 38). Chiastic composition orders larger literary blocks, like phrases, parts of scenes or entire groups of scenes, according to this pattern of inverse parallelism.<sup>32</sup> The practice is embedded in tradition, appearing in both biblical and classical texts. Merging and overlapping multiple complex chiasma can produce impressive levels of conceptual complexity.

Following Davis’s method of outlining Shakespeare’s complex chiasma, we can schematize the beginning of the soliloqui as follows:

A: To be, or not to be – that is the question	[infinitive construction; the contrast of life and death]
B: Whether ’tis noble in the mind to suffer	[antithesis: <i>suffer/opposing; in the mind/sleep</i> ]
C: The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune	[ <i>slings and arrows = shocks that flesh is heir to</i> ]
B: Or to take arms against a sea of troubles And by opposing end them.	[anaphora: <i>and by</i> ; antithesis: <i>suffer/take arms; troubles = (heart-)ache; end = end</i> ]
A: To die, to sleep – /No more	[the centre of the chiasmus: antithesis <i>die/sleep</i> complicated by enjambment]
B: and by a sleep to say we end/The hear-ache,	[ <i>end = consummation</i> ; antithesis: <i>sleep/in the mind</i> ]
C: and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to;	[ <i>slings and arrows = shocks that flesh is heir to</i> ]
B: ’tis a consummation/Devoutly to be wished	[ <i>consummation=end</i> ; pun: <i>devoutly</i> ]
A: to die, to sleep!	[infinitive construction; the contrast of life and death is now more questionable]

(3.i.56-64)

We can see that the scheme links sleeping with being, as opposed to dying and not being. This obviously makes sense, since sleeping implies waking up, something only the living can do. And yet, the infinitive construction, “to die, to sleep” (3.i.60) identifies *to sleep* as the apposition of *to die*. Therefore, dying is equated with sleeping, instead of with “sleeping no more.” This shift is also enabled by the enjambment which transfers “no more” into the following line. This metrical split casts a wrench into the interpretive

<sup>32</sup>For example, Hamlet’s four soliloquies are arranged according to a chiastic pattern (Maquerlot 94).

mechanism, as the phrase seems to transform before our eyes, either turning “to die is to sleep” into “to die is to sleep no more” (i.e. “to sleep is to live”), or stating that “to die is *no more* than to sleep.” Thus, to die becomes no more than to live, and life becomes no more than death.

The problematic relationship between being and non-being is further underscored by the opposition is between “suffer[ing] the slings and arrows of outrages fortune” and “tak[ing] arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end[ing] them”. If this does not immediately seem off, the “tilt” is signalled by the hendiadys “slings and arrows”. As Wright points out, “one is an instrument for slinging, the other is a thing slung, but slings do not sling arrows” (Wright 182). With this in mind, let us look at the opposition again. The mix of passivity and violence implied in the suffering of slings and arrows are closer to death (and suicide) than to life, yet the phrase describes life. Death, confusingly, is described as “taking arms” (like, say, slings and arrows) against an enemy – as an act of survival.<sup>33</sup> The action itself is deflated by its object. It is absurd to fight the sea, instead of, say, a swarm or an army. Furthermore, the *them* in the phrase *by opposing end them* can syntactically designate both the “sea of troubles” and “arms”: it is, after all, by opposing oneself in suicide that one ends a sea of troubles. The position of *end* as the extra syllable before the caesura signals the “hidden” meaning that this is not the right way to end, and possibly, that there may not *be* a right way to end. The quibble on “devoutly” intensifies the contradiction: Hamlet longs for death fervently (*devoutly*) enough to consider suicide, yet since God has “fixed/His canon ’gainst self slaughter,” (1.ii.131-2) the truly pious (*devout*) cannot commit suicide.

Metrically, the lines move from the regularity of the opening towards a disintegration, as if reflecting “thought seeking a way and straying from the way.” (Teskey 13) Likewise, frequent enjambments contribute to the disorientation – where do the lines begin and end? Our chiasmic diagram shows that sleep (unconscious and irrational) is parallel with mind (conscious and rational). Throughout the soliloquy, logical distinctions are obscured, while the illogical patterns are emphasised by the insistent repetition of infinitive constructions, syllable clusters, phrases and the use of anaphora (Booth 344). It appears as if Hamlet is sleepwalking through his waking reflection, almost like a living dead.

The chiasmic composition at the beginning of the soliloquy at once orders it formally and complicates it conceptually. As Patricia Ann Lissner summarizes, chiasmus is an appealing poetic instrument for Mannerists precisely because it enables intricate contradictions in a minimum of space:

The combination of severe constriction brought on by oblique intersections and the rigorous, *ad infinitum* cyclones between integration and disintegration creative of the indeterminate accords with the signatures of Mannerist artists [...]: their aberrant spatial constriction or overstressed

<sup>33</sup>In the line “With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,” (3.I.76) the imagery recalls the concepts of “taking up arms” (bare bodkin) and “suffering” (bearing fardels), so that the incompatible concepts of life and death once again inhabit not only the same line, but also the same sound pattern through the homophony of *bare-bear*. The alliteration of “**to bear** fardels **or to** use a *bare bodkin*” echoes “**to be or not to be**” (Booth 346) This acoustic “levelling” of contradiction is underscored by the fact that “*two separate* syntactical units are held together by two *precisely equal halves* of a *single* rhythmic unit” (345-6, emphasis mine)

foreshortening; their unexpected or severe physical, especially bodily, torquing, twisting, and spraining; and their torturing, some past recognition, of certainty and ease. These anti-classicism techniques heighten psychological tension [...] for the purpose of enunciating rigorous dissonance. [...] Chiasmus is ambidextrous: it can devise on behalf of the classical mindset and it can devise on behalf of its counter mindset, the anti-classical. Shiftiness and counter-productions are first lists in its play-book (Lissner 303).

We could describe Hamlet's line of argument as *labyrinthine*.<sup>34</sup> The directions of sentences shift as we read them. Further along in the soliloquy is the phrase "what dreams may come" (3.i.66). As Booth notes, this *seems* like a question, until when we come to the end of the sentence – the appropriate "must give us pause" (3.i.68) – when we realise that what we thought a question is actually "a noun phrase, the subject of a declarative sentence that only comes into being with the late appearance of the unexpected verb" (344-345). The following "There's the respect/that makes calamity of so long life" (3.i.68-69) can be interpreted as "the respect that makes calamity last long," but the conventional meaning of the *makes...of* construction make us read the lines in reverse, as "the respect is what makes long life a calamity" (344-345). The question of choosing death over life is complicated not by the fear that death is something other than life, but that it might be too much *like* life. Their conflation is enabled by the soliloquy's main metaphor which equates death to sleep. In this conceptually and formally intricate passage, interpretation cannot help but be ambiguous.<sup>35</sup> The poetic conflation of life and death through sleep reflects what happens in the world as constructed in the play: the figure which sets the entire plot in motion is the Ghost, who incidentally spends his last *living* moments *sleeping*, or, alternatively, *dies* in his *sleep*.

J. E. Ryan's extensive analysis of Shakespeare's composition shows that all of his plays are structured according to a chiastic design, "in which each scene of the first half of the play reflects an essential thematic action in the corresponding scene of the second half" (5). However, while in other plays the chiastic design connects actions, in *Hamlet* it connects instances of speech – speculation, reflection, general commentary or "mere words" (116). Therefore, the play's thematic coherence necessarily includes *the subjective understanding of the speakers/characters*, their mental and verbal ordering of reality. As we have seen, Hamlet's ordering of his reality in 3.i. rests upon a (conventional) literary fiction.

### In my mind's eye: the play(s) within the play

Hamlet is jolted from his paralysis by the arrival of the players. More specifically, what spurs him into action is a performance of the "Aeneas's speech to Dido, [...] especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter." (2.ii.451-2) The Player's speech is stylistically distinguished from the speech at the "real" level of the play, i.e. the speech of characters at Elsinore. The nature of the distinction is interesting. As Levin

<sup>34</sup>For more on Mannerism and the concept of labyrinths, see Hocke 1991: 127-136.

<sup>35</sup>The same tortuous movements are present in the poems of John Donne. His *Satyres*, for example, advocate a roundabout way of reaching the truth and use "convoluted syntax, quibbles and contraries of verse" to reflect a mind in the process of thinking. (Cousins 105)

points out, in the Player's speech Shakespeare "deliberately revert[s] to a more stilted meter, along with a more artificial tone" (281). Strongly marked caesuras are complemented by a "barrage of striking tropes and strained expressions": strange words, ten of which do not occur anywhere else in Shakespeare, are strategically placed within a predominantly monosyllabic vocabulary (282). Finally, the predominance of the "unnatural" colours black, red and white, along with references to heraldry, serves to enhance the pictorial quality of the scene. (283) Put simply, the play broadcasts the fictitiousness of the performance.

The speech of the characters in the *Murder of Gonzago* is distinguished from the speech of the court-audience at Elsinore in similar ways. The language in the *Murder of Gonzago* is decidedly more stylized than the speech of the Elsinore court. The characters in the play within the play speak in rhymed iambic pentameter couplets; conversely, the Elsinore court-audience switches to prose during the performance, emphasizing the contrast (Replogle 154). The couplets in the play within the play are closed with very few run-on lines (154), while the lines of the "real" characters at Elsinore are enjambment-heavy and frequently shared or squinting throughout the play proper. The effect is similar to that of the stilted meter of the Player's speech.

Furthermore, the Player-king's opening speech, which begins the play within the play, features multiple astrological and mythological references and ample periphrasis, along with what Replogle calls "numerical elegance" (154) in the numerical inversion of "And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen/About the world have times twelve thirties been" (3.ii.155-6). By Shakespeare's time, such devices had "traditional, formal and literary connotations" (158). These are clear examples of "striking tropes and strained expression" and they are used to accentuate the difference between the "real" and the "fictional" level. Furthermore, the play within the play's vocabulary, like that of the Player's speech, is predominantly monosyllabic, with the appearance of "several unusual words with an archaic flavour" which Shakespeare does not use elsewhere (155). In short, the "fictional" level of the play within the play is highly conventional and clearly separate from the "real" level of the play proper.

This does not mean, however, that the two levels are completely separate. The Player's speech is specifically chosen by Hamlet because it thematically *parallels his own circumstances*. Furthermore, the ultimate effect of the Player's performance is that Hamlet describes the Player's fictional actions as *more real* than his own. The performance has as its consequence the most prominent conflation of the fictional and the real levels in the play, as it "directs" Hamlet to stage another theatrical performance in order to prove Claudius's guilt. While the play maintains (even emphasizes) the boundaries between its "real" and its "fictional" level, the play's protagonist has trouble differentiating between the two and actively strives to interpret one through the other. After all, as Hamlet explains moments before the Mousetrap is performed, to act is "to hold the mirror up to nature" (3.ii.21). The implication, of course, is that mirrors reflect the world as it is.

This notion of mirroring finds a stylistic analogy in *The Murder of Gonzago*, which is full of syntactic figures involving inversion and reflection. Most common is anastrophe, a simple inversion of syntactic order. The more complex “ill-placement of words” (Replegle 123) include cacosyntheton, the placement of adjective after a noun, as in “fruit unripe” (3.ii.200) or “thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit and time agreeing” (3.ii.206), and antimetabole, involving the inversion and repetition of words, as in “Grief joys, joy grieves on slender accident” (3.ii.209).<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, the cumulative effect of these reflexive devices, in combination with the closed lines, overtly stylized devices and monosyllabic vocabulary, is to emphasize not the similarity, but the *difference* between the “real” and the “fictional” levels. As Replegle concludes, the language “tend[s] to give the play [within the play] a peculiarly slow movement which contrasts with the dialogue of the actor-audience and further *heightens the tension*.” (159, emphasis mine) And yet, the purpose of the play within the play is not simply to mirror, but to *influence* the “real” level by impelling Claudius to react, and it *succeeds* in doing so.

The notion of mirroring is more complex than it at first seems. H. M. Whall argues that *Hamlet* marks Shakespeare’s transition to a representation of a “more complex reality” similar to that seen in anamorphic paintings, or, as she defines them, “pictures which make use of perspective techniques to present a double image [and] demonstrate extremely complex theories” (302).<sup>37</sup> We can see this most clearly in the Mousetrap’s villain, Lucianus. Though he murders the king by pouring poison in his ear like Claudius, he is the king’s *nephew*, not his brother (3.ii.244). This fictional creation yokes together the play’s “mighty opposites” (5.ii.62) of villain and protagonist. Though the play is primarily supposed to re-enact Claudius’ crime, Lucianus manages to get only seven lines in and the play abruptly comes to a halt a mere twenty lines after he steps on stage. In comparison, the player-king who muses on death and futility and the player-queen who protests too much together take up more than seventy lines. The play within the play seems more concerned with them and their relationship than with the act of king-slaying. A. Thorne accounts for this by the play within the play’s need “to accommodate [Hamlet’s] multiple and contradictory self-identifications” (128). A similar problem is posed by the figure of Phryrus in the player’s speech. While, on the one hand, the speech clearly describes him as the villain killing an innocent victim, Phryrus is also a son unhesitatingly avenging his father. He is at once a model *of* Claudius and a model *for* Hamlet. Rather than a simple reflection of facts, the Mousetrap is Hamlet’s way of “handling” his father’s death, his mother’s inconstancy and Claudius’s guilt. It reflects Hamlet’s *idea* of his world as well as the world

<sup>36</sup>For more on this syntactic disordering and its function in contemporary poetry, especially in the construction of conceits, see Ciglar-Žanić 191-213.

<sup>37</sup>One such image is Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*. Painted as a double portrait in standard perspective, the painting contains something resembling “an inexplicable swirl” (Whall 303) in its lower half. When viewed through an appropriate optical instrument, the swirl is revealed to be a large skull superimposed onto rather than integrated into the portrait. The painting is a visual conceit based on the twisting of perspectival rules, which makes the spectator aware of his or her own position in front of the image. The ghost of Old Hamlet is similarly integral to and unintegrated in the play: he sets the whole plot in motion, yet disappears in the middle of it.

itself. It, therefore, reflects the world at once as it is and as it is not. Both the objective circumstances – the world “as it is” – and Hamlet's own subjective view of them – the world “as it is not” – make up the “reality” constructed by the play and mirrored by the play within the play.

The notion of the subjective perspective brings us to another complexity which is revealed in the play within the play scene: Hamlet's perspective is not the only perspective. The Mousetrap *seems* to be more about the royal couple than the murder not because Hamlet stages it, but because *Claudius stops it where he does*. By interrupting the play before the audience has a chance to see “how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife,” (3.ii.263-4) Claudius keeps their attention on the part which seems to fit Hamlet better than himself. His behaviour can be interpreted as impulsive or as a “shrewdly improvised management of his audience's response.” (Cohen 236) While for Hamlet the play reveals Claudius as the actual villain, for the court-audience it reveals Hamlet as a potential villain.

In its overlapping frames of reference, the play within the play scene reminds of the scene in Act 1 when both Hamlet and Claudius first appear on stage. The ostensible focus of the Mousetrap scene is Hamlet's re-vision of *The Murder of Gonzago*, but the audience knows the performance is an “empty” centre and that the real focus is on Claudius. This is an inversion of 1.ii., where Claudius's performance is the “empty centre” while the real focus is on Hamlet. However, the play within the play scene is more conceptually intricate than 1.ii., because Hamlet's running commentary constantly draws attention *back* to the scene's “empty centre.” The audience's eyes jump around the stage with nothing to permanently rest on, as they watch Hamlet watching Claudius watching Hamlet's version (or “vision”) of the play, only for the version to get “revised” (or “re-visioned,” or “reversed”) by Claudius.<sup>38</sup> Whose version/vision does one believe?

The introduction of a separate “fictional” level in the Mousetrap scene both *imitates* and *complicates* the disintegration of focus established on the “real” level in 1.ii. Lucianus can reflect Hamlet or Claudius depending on whose perspective you take. Hamlet and the court can arrive at radically different interpretations of the same fictional creation because their respective interpretations of the fiction depend on their interpretation of their reality, and their interpretation of reality can, in turn, be manipulated through fiction.

While the play raises questions about the relationship between the fictional and the real, it provides no definitive answers. Within the play, fiction can seem like reality, as demonstrated by Hamlet's reaction to the Player and Claudius's reaction to the Mousetrap, while reality can seem like fiction, as demonstrated by Hamlet's equating of death with sleep and the ghost's death while sleeping. But the similarities of the real and the fictional can also be misleading, as we see in the court's interpretation of the Mousetrap.

---

<sup>38</sup>According to Sypher, Mannerist pictorial compositions have a similar effect on their viewers (126).

## ***The observed of all observers: self-reflexivity***

*Hamlet* is a highly self-reflexive play, featuring discussions on players and playing as well as containing one of the most famous instances of a play within a play in dramatic history. According to Pavličić, Mannerists utilize self-reflexivity to investigate every aspect of literary production: “the author (his status in the world and his relationship to his work), the work (its value and the ways with which this value is achieved), [...] the reader, his reactions, and the general way in which a reader, or the collective which the work addresses, receives and interprets the work.” (110) *Hamlet* was written around 1600, when Shakespeare, as Marino observes, started to produce increasingly “complex, original work that absorbed his junior rivals' critiques on the one hand but on the other engaged in a searingly powerful debate with his own earlier dramatic style.” (319) Theatrical discussions within the play can be seen as Shakespeare “acting out” the debate about the value of theatre and the ways to achieve it, while Shakespeare’s relationship to his previous and current work is similarly “acted out” within the play through the relationship between two theatrically savvy characters. Furthermore, the play constantly emphasizes the concept of performance, leading the audience to become aware of its own interaction with players and the play.

### **To kill so capital a calf: authorial self-reinvention**

In her analysis of Shakespeare’s mature style, A. R. Braunmuller suggests that Polonius’s extravagance of expression is Shakespeare’s own self-deprecating nod to his early style (55). This remark is interesting in light of the Mannerist problematic relation with tradition and the penchant for self-reflexivity. The need for an ever more intricate re-working of conventions ultimately leads Mannerist authors to frequently reinvent their own earlier style, which often results in self-parody. Polonius's lumbering verbosity is hard to miss even on its own, let alone when it is compared to Hamlet's verbal acrobatics.

Though at first sight Hamlet and Polonius seem to be as different from each other as two characters can be, they have one thing in common: both have close associations with the theatre. Hamlet has firm opinions on the player's craft and treats the players like old friends. He also hand-picks an already well-known play, writes an additional “speech of some dozen or sixteen lines” (2.ii.544) and inserts it seamlessly, showing complete mastery of dramatic conventions.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, his staging of the Mousetrap is essentially an act of manipulating a pre-existing, conventional play into suiting his “total conception” of plays as “traps” for truth. All of this puts Hamlet in the role of the dramatist.

Polonius also has firm opinions on aesthetic value, as exhibited when he criticizes the “vile phrase” (2.ii.111) in Hamlet's poem to Ophelia, or when he praises the player's “mobled queen” (2.ii.508) even

---

<sup>39</sup>It is impossible to tell which part of the play is Hamlet’s or if the “speech” is a false trail, another instance of the play interrupting itself.

though he thinks the player's speech is, on the whole, "too long" (2.ii.502). Furthermore, he, like Hamlet, believes that a "bait of falsehood" can capture a "carp of truth." (2.i.60) For this purpose, he uses his own children and servants as actors in staged scenarios. Cohen describes the Polonius and Reynaldo scene in 2.i. as "a burlesque of an oldtimer from University productions instructing an innocent in an outmoded, tendentious style of acting." (229).

Both characters, then, act as dramatists and share similar views about what plays are for. The only difference is that their styles are different. Hamlet's instruction to the players to avoid overt theatricality can be seen as a critique of Polonius's affectation.

Immediately preceding the Mousetrap, the relationship of the two characters is outlined in a conceit which includes a direct reference to playing:

Hamlet: [...] My lord,  
you played once i'th'university, you say?  
Polonius: That I did, my lord, and was accounted a  
good actor.  
Hamlet: What did you enact?  
Polonius: I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th'university  
Capitol, Brutus killed me.  
Hamlet: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a  
calf there.

(3.ii.95-103)

The conceit is among the most prominent instances of verbal foreshadowing in the play, pointing to the imminent killing of Polonius in 3.iv., with the wordplay on *brute* and *Brutus* also laying the groundwork for Hamlet's speech to Gertrude in the same scene.<sup>40</sup> Ferguson argues that the image of the calf implies passivity and stupidity, but also associates what is essentially a blunder murder with "sacrificial slaughter." (254) By advancing from the (fictional) killing of sense through wordplay to (real) senseless killing through the arras, Hamlet takes on the role of a king "a scourge and minister," (3.iv.175) who "[goes] a progress through the guts of a beggar." (4.iii.29-30) But the conceit also contains a *direct reference to an earlier work* by Shakespeare. Thompson Oakes suggests that the actors who originally played Hamlet and Polonius had probably played Brutus and Caesar in Shakespeare's earlier play *Julius Caesar* (215). This fact enables us to unpack the meaning of the conceit in connection with authorial self-reflexivity. The contrast between these two theatrical aficionados and the act of "sacrificial" killing of one by the other in connection with the fact that all of this happens in the first of Shakespeare's mature and experimental plays allows us to read the Polonius-Hamlet relationship as Shakespeare's "acting out" of the break with his own previous way of writing, his personal "tradition."

---

<sup>40</sup> Moments before he brutally (*brute*) murders Polonius, Hamlet will accuse Gertrude of beastliness (*brute*) and breaching trust (*Brutus*) for her relationship with the ultimate betrayer (*Brutus*), Claudius. Ironically, Hamlet may be accused of brutality, beastliness and betrayal in his behaviour towards Ophelia, the ultimate victim of Polonius's murder.



## I know not seems: Hamlet and the player

Maynard Mack singles out the word *act* as the “radical metaphor” of the entire play (52). On the one hand, to act is to *do* something; on the other to act is to *pretend*, i.e. to do something without doing it. The inherent ambivalence of the word leads us back to the play’s preoccupation with the boundaries between the fictional and the real. As we have seen, Hamlet uses theatrical performance not only to make sense of his circumstances, but to influence other characters in the Mousetrap scene. The instructions to the players revolve around the idea that plays should “hold [...] the mirror up to nature” (3.ii.22). The reason for this is that Hamlet wishes Claudius to recognize his own actions in the actions of the players. But it is a strange move. At the very beginning of the play, Hamlet emphatically scorns the “actions which a man might play” (1.ii.84) as incapable to express “that within which passes show” (1.ii.85). By the time the Mousetrap is held, however, he appears to have changed his mind and now sees actions that might be played as a means to “trap” a person’s “within.” Furthermore, when he gets an opportunity to “ex-act” his revenge in Act 3, he *copies* theatrical models. His opening line “Now might/I do it, *pat*” (3.iii.73, emphasis mine) is a reshuffling of Lucianus’s “Thoughts black, hands *apt*” (3.ii.255, emphasis mine), while his pose over the kneeling Claudius repeats Phryrus’s stance. Ironically, when he sees Claudius kneeling at prayer, he decides to delay his revenge to a time when the king is “at some act that has no relish of salvation in it.” (3.iii.92) But Claudius only *seems* to be praying. Hamlet, who begins the play by talking about a “within that passes show,” at the crucial moment assumes that Claudius’s “show” reflects his “within.” Does the within govern the actions which a man may play, or is it the other way around?

In the same breath in which he scorns “seems” in his opening speech, Hamlet testifies to its ability to influence “is” by using it as a *noun*, not a verb (1.ii.76). “Seems” is not conceived as an action, but as a *thing* capable of action. The player, who internalizes an exterior role to the point of weeping for Hecuba, is the most obvious example of the blurring of boundaries between seeming and being – in the theatre, “seems” becomes a paradoxical *external interiority*.

The notion of an externalized interiority leads us to the device of the soliloquy, through which, conventionally, the soliloquist “reveals his or her inner thoughts and feelings to the audience” (Baldick 239). L. S. Champion argues that, while in Shakespeare’s other tragedies the soliloquies function conventionally, this is not the case in *Hamlet*:

Throughout Shakespeare’s early and middle tragedies [...] the soliloquy clarifies the developing personality of the protagonist, reflecting a consistent quality by which the spectators are made to share the struggle and anticipate the future events of the plot [...] These generalities will not hold for *Hamlet*, however. Here the soliloqui does not establish a vision of a consistent personality; since the decision of one moment is forgotten or ignored in the next, the soliloquy does not project a pattern of narrative anticipation; it is not used for any conscious articulation of commitment to passion; nor – following the precipitous actions which leave a trail of human carnage from Gertrude’s bedchamber to the great hall of the castle – is it used to describe any moment of insight: indeed there is no soliloquy whatever after 4.iv.[...] (265-266)

Rather than providing insight into a character's "within," Hamlet's soliloquies function as a *semblance* of interiority: they convince the audience that there is something beneath the surface, but the surfaces only hide other surfaces. As far as Hamlet's actions are concerned, the only consistent thing about them is their inconsistency. As Thorne comments, Hamlet's behaviour is so versatile that "[e]ach shift of viewpoint discloses a different persona, generating a succession of selves whose discontinuity and contradictoriness preclude any integration into a single, unified entity." (121)<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the play, Hamlet eats of "the chameleon's dish" (3.ii.91) like a master-player, sampling now of the role of the avenger, now of the fool, now of the scholar, now of the soldier. What the audience sees when it watches Hamlet in action is a *virtuoso act of acting* – he plays so many roles that it seems as if he is playing none. While he presents himself as the player's antithesis, what is *actually* on stage is a *player proclaiming himself antithetical to a player*, which only emphasizes the player's presence. Incidentally, this is precisely what the scene when Hamlet instructs the players is all about. The audience witnesses an actor playing a part which is giving instructions on how to play parts to other actors playing parts who are about to play other parts, with the instruction to act as "untheatrically" as possible, which only highlights the theatricality of the entire scene.

Hamlet's speech to the players is thus the play's most obviously self-reflexive moment. William Empson notes that what the original audience actually saw on stage during this scene were the members of the Chamberlain's Men discussing how to successfully perform a revenge play and that part of the scene's ingenuity was to "turn this calculated collapse of dramatic illusion into an illustration of the central theme." (86) *Hamlet* is not simply about the question of revenge, but about how to *perform* revenge. The self-reflexive relationship of the protagonist to his own performance and theatrical performance in general is part and parcel of the play's self-reflexive emphasis on performance *as* performance.

### What is it you would see: the role of the audience

The theatrical performance of *The Murder of Gonzago* mirrors the theatricality of the entire Elsinore court. As Charles R. Forker states, in *Hamlet* "all the major characters except Horatio take parts, play roles, and practice to deceive." (217) Nothing is as it seems – courtly spectacles like weddings, plays and duels hide sinister deeds and intentions beneath their glittering surface; the usurper plays the king, while the true heir

---

<sup>41</sup>As it happens, a similar principle underpins the *figura serpentinata*, the conceptual basis of Mannerist painting and sculpture, which exploits figural contortion and gestural contradiction to expose the deficiency of the traditional fixed point of view. The "serpentine figure" is characterized by a spiral movement around a central axis. In a single figure, for example, the legs, torso, head and hands can all "twist" in different, often contradictory, directions. The effect is at once one of intense motion, because the lines radiate in all directions, and of paralysis, because they cancel each other out. Prominent examples of the *figura serpentinata* in visual arts include Michelangelo's *Victory* and the figures in Bronzino's *Allegory of Venus*. The spectators either see the front *and* the back of a figure at once, or they are forced to circle around it, keeping all its separate sections at once in their minds. Either way, a fixed point of view does not render a logical whole. As Panofsky observes, the *figura serpentinata* "presenting [...] a "revolving view," [...] conveys the impression of an insecure, unstable situation, which, however, could be transformed into classic equilibrium if the aimless versatility of the figures were directed by a stabilizing and controlling force." (1972: 176) The point is, of course, that there is no such force.

plays the fool; spies pose as friends trying to “play” a man like a recorder and children are manipulated to play parts in their parent's machinations. The frequent usage of theatrical vocabulary in the play enhances the sense of the overlap between the fictional and the real, making it difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. However, because the play also emphasizes performance *as* performance, the self-reflexive elements in *Hamlet* also underscore the *difference* between fiction and reality because they constantly draw the audience's attention to the circumstances and mechanics of the theatrical act. For example, immediately after the encounter with the ghost, at the height of tragic seriousness, Hamlet sprinkles his speech with references to stage mechanics, obsolete theatrical styles and role-playing, which breaks the theatrical illusion at its height.<sup>42</sup>

Maynard Mack notes that in *Hamlet* “the ambiguities of ‘seem’ coil and uncoil throughout this play, and over against them is set the idea of ‘seeing’.” (49) The near homophony of *seem* and *see* is an apt poetic shorthand for the confusion between appearances and reality, but also for the fundamental theatrical relationship between the players who seem and the audience that sees. And while in Elsinore seeming overpowers seeing, in the Globe, or any other place where *Hamlet* is being performed, the relationship is, or should be, reversed. As Cohen observes, “[...]Shakespeare test[s] the limits of his dramaturgy to create a distance, both aesthetic and ethical, from which the audience could be made conscious as an audience of its affirmations.” (244) The irony of Hamlet's anti-theatricality becomes obvious, as we have seen, only in performance: even when he scorns seeming, the audience watching *Hamlet* sees a player who only *seems* to scorn seeming. More specifically, the irony becomes obvious if the audience is conscious of the performance *as* performance, of the player *as* player and of itself *as* audience.

Another word on Mack's list of *Hamlet's* key terms is “assume.” (49) While it primarily denotes the act of pretending, its other meaning – supposing something is true without proof – creeps in (Curtius) at various points in the play, as characters constantly assume things about themselves and each other. During the Mousetrap performance, Hamlet is said to be “as good as a chorus” (3.ii.245).<sup>43</sup> However, Hamlet frequently interprets wrongly. He misinterprets Claudius's actions in the prayer scene and the identity of the man behind the arras in Gertrude's bedchamber. Polonius is the play's other example of the dangers of (mis)interpretation, which is directly linked with a tendency to interpret reality through the lenses of

---

<sup>42</sup>Hamlet refers to the ghost as the “fellow in the cellarage,” (1.v.151) reminding that the ghost is actually an actor disappearing through a trap-door and scurrying about under the stage. The space under the stage was also known as “hell,” (Dover Wilson 297) which metaphorically stitches the real artifice of the Elizabethan stage and the artificial reality of the play back together, but the seams remain visible. Immediately following is the phrase *hic and ubique* (1.v.156), alluding to the earlier version of *Hamlet*, parodied because of its tendentious and theatrical style (Cohen 228-9). Hamlet's decision to “put an antic disposition on” (1.v.172) appears in the middle of this self-reflexive intermezzo and itself functions self-reflexively. In the old story, antics are an essential part of an elaborate revenge strategy. More importantly, the genre of revenge play itself derives from Seneca, an *antique* model.

<sup>43</sup>Hamlet's very first line in the play is an *aside*, a conventional dramatic device of speaking directly to the audience, signaling his penchant for commentary. Ironically, it is Ophelia, the most tragic victim of Hamlet's penchant for misinterpretation, who compares Hamlet to a chorus, the ultimate interpreter.

literary fiction. Polonius bases his conclusion that “the origin and commencement of [Hamlet's] grief sprung from neglected love” (3.i.180-1) on Hamlet's love poem to Ophelia, which regurgitates conventional Petrarchist motifs and figures. For Polonius, Petrarchism is the key to Hamlet's madness: since Petrarchist lovers are conventionally mad, Hamlet is mad because of unrequited love. Both Polonius and Hamlet see the truth they *want* to see it. When Polonius instructs Reynaldo on how to enquire for Laertes's (mis)conduct in France, his aim is to confirm that he is flawed *in the right way*, just as Hamlet stages a play in which the murderer seduces the king's wife to confirm Claudius's is guilty *in the right way*. Polonius assumes Hamlet a mad lover and is wrong, while Hamlet assumes that Claudius is guilty and is right. As for the audience, the play eludes expectations at every turn and presents situations which can be interpreted in mutually contradicting ways. The question of Hamlet's madness, arguably one of the most discussed questions in the history of literature, is a prime example. By anticipating their assumptions, taunting them with ambiguity and constantly reminding them of its theatricality – most prominently in the play within the play – the play confronts its spectators with their own participation in and responsibility for the construction of meaning.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to give an outline of the Mannerist features in *Hamlet*. We have defined Mannerism as a period in literary history between approximately 1520 and 1620, and have identified three features which are found in all Mannerist literary works. These include: a) the manipulation of literary conventions to produce a conceptually intricate work; b) the emphasis on the ambiguous relationship of the fictional and the real; c) self-reflexivity. All three can be found in *Hamlet*.

As far as manipulating conventions goes, we have focused on Shakespeare's reworking of metrical conventions of the Elizabethan plays and his use of conventional imagery in his conceits. His extensive experimentation with the pattern of the iambic pentameter enables his plays to approach a more “regular” way of speaking, but they also complicate the audience's reception and, by extension, understanding of what is being said. His conceits employ conventional imagery and ideas to build complicated and contradictory semantic structures, while their repetition in disparate scenes ensures the play's thematic coherence.

The world of Elsinore is an inscrutable and illogical place, where nothing is as it seems. The play represents this inexplicability through the use of hendiadys, a figure of speech by which a single idea is expressed by two semantically proximate words joined by a conjunction, resulting in a cognitive dissonance, a simultaneous conflation and separation of ideas. Moreover, similar principles of duality unified by uncertain parallels – or fragmented unity – underline the play's organization of scenes.

Throughout the play, actions are repeated for no logical reason. Furthermore, disparate scenes parallel each other, while scenes that follow each other often contradict each other.

The characters in the play often compare their reality with fiction. The attempts are sometimes successful, as reality and fiction seemingly coincide, while at other times they fail, as fiction becomes more substantial than reality or leads to dangerous misinterpretations. Even when it works, the integration of fiction and reality always contains levels of complexity and paradox which obstruct any unambiguous interpretation. The ambiguities alert to the importance of subjective perspective and the preconceptions which guide understanding. By following Hamlet's lead and being misled, the audience becomes aware of its own participation in the act of interpretation.

This leads to the final Mannerist element, self-reflexivity. Mannerist literature takes its own procedures and purposes as their theme. *Hamlet* is an overtly self-reflexive play: players are shown as players, acting styles and audience's expectations are discussed, performances are delivered and criticized. Shakespeare investigates the author's relation to his work through the characters of Hamlet and Polonius, utilizing the relationship of the two as a vehicle for "acting out" his own artistic development. The theatrical vocabulary permeating the play enforces the blurring of the boundaries between the fictional and the real, but also enables the dismantling of dramatic illusion, thereby re-establishing those boundaries. This is most visible in the conceptual criss-crossing of characters and players, with players being characters and characters acting as players and in the device of the play within the play.. The self-reflexivity contributes to the play's conceptual intricacy and to its representation of the world as an ultimately unanswerable puzzle, while simultaneously making the audience aware of the theatrical act and of its own participation in it. In summary, we can conclude that *Hamlet* exhibits all the characteristics of a Mannerist literary work.

## WORKS CITED:

- Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Blank, P. *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Booth, S. "On the Value of 'Hamlet'." *Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages: Hamlet*. Ed. Brett Foster Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. 327-349.
- Bradbrook, M. C. *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Braunmuller, A. R. "Shakespeare's Late Style." *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Jonathan F. S. Post. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 43-62.
- Champion, L. S. "'By Indirections Find Directions Out': The Soliloquies in 'Hamlet'." *The Journal of General Education*. 27.4. (1976): 265-280. Jstor. Web. 5/10/2015.
- Ciglar-Žanić, J. *Domišljato stvoren svijet: barok u engleskoj književnosti*. Jastrebarsko: Naklada Slap, 2008.
- Cohen, B. M. "'What is it You Would See?': Hamlet and the Conasciousness of the Theatre." *ELH* 44.2. (1977): 222-247. Jstor. Web. 19/1/2016.
- Cousins, A. D. "The Coming of Mannerism: The Late Raleigh and the Early Donne." *English Literary Renaissance*. 9.1. (1979): 86-107. Jstor. Web. 7/7/2016.
- Curtius, E. R. *Europska književnost i latinsko srednjovjekovlje*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1971.
- Davis, W. L. "Structural Secrets: Shakespeare's Complex Chiasmus." *Style* 39.3. (2005): 237-257. Jstor. Web. 8/3/2016.
- Eco, U. *On Beauty*. London: Seeker & Warburg, 2004.
- Empson, W. *Essays on Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Ferguson, M. "Hamlet: Letters and Spirits." *Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages: Hamlet*. Ed. Brett Foster Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. 349-366.
- Fisher-Lichte, E. *History of European Drama and Theatre*. London : Reutledge, 2002.
- Forker, Ch. R. "Shakespeare's Theatrical Symbolism and Its Function in 'Hamlet'." *Shakespeare Quarterly*

- 14.3. (1963): 215-229. Jstor. Web. 12/4/2016.
- Guilfoyle, Ch. "Not Two: Denial and Duality in 'Hamlet'." *Comparative Drama* 23.4. (1989/90): 297-313. Jstor. Web. 5/10/2015.
- Hankins, J. E. "Hamlet's 'God Kissing Carrion': A Theory of the Generation of Life." *PMLA* 64.3. (1949): 507-516. Jstor. Web. 23/12/2016.
- Hauser, A. *The Social History of Art: Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque (Volume II)*. London: Reutledge, 1989.
- Hocke, G. R. *Manirizam u književnosti: alkemija jezika i ezoterično umijeće kombiniranja: prilozi poredbenoj povijesti europskih književnosti*. Zagreb: Cekade, 1984.
- . *Svijet kao labirint: manira i manija u europskoj umjetnosti od 1520. do 1650. i u suvremenosti*. Zagreb: August Cesarec, 1991.
- Janson, H. W., A. F. Janson. *Povijest umjetnosti*. Varaždin: Stanek d.o.o., 2005.
- Keller, S. D. *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric: A Study of Nine Plays*. Tübingen: Francke, 2009.
- Levin, H. "An Explication of the Player's Speech (Hamlet, II.ii.472-541)." *The Kenyon Review* 12.2. (1950): 273-296. Jstor. Web. 2/2/2017.
- Levy, E. P. "In Our Circumstances and Course of Thought': The Problematics of Conceptual Scheme in 'Hamlet'." *Modern Language Studies* 32.2. (2002): 91-108. Jstor. Web. 9/2/2015.
- Lissner, P. A. *Chi-Thinking: Chiasmus and Cognition*. Diss. University of Maryland. 2007. <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/7687>.
- Mack, M. "The World of 'Hamlet'." *The Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Hamlet': a collection of critical essays*. Ed. David Bevington. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968. 47-64.
- Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. London: Methuen & Co., 1957.
- Maniates, M. R. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979.
- . "Musical Mannerism: Effeteness or Virility?" *The Musical Quarterly* (1971): 270-293.

- Maquerlot, Jean-Pierre. *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition: A Reading of Five Problem Plays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Marino, J. J. "Middle Shakespeare." *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 318-334.
- McDonald, R. *Shakespeare's Late Style*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Mead, S. X. "Shakespeare's Play with Perspective: Sonnet 24, 'Hamlet', 'Lear'." *Studies in Philology* 109.3. (2012): 225-257. Jstor. Web. 8/3/2016.
- Meiburg, C., S. van Tuinen. "Brewing Dissonance: Conceptualizing Mannerism and Baroque in Music with Deleuze." *Diacritics* 42.3. (2014): 54-82. Project Muse. Web. 16/3/2016.
- On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*. Ed: Culler, Jonathan. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.
- Pangallo, M. A. "Dramatic Metre." *The Oxford Handbook to Shakespeare*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 100-126.
- Panofsky, E. *Idea: prilog povijesti pojma starije teorije umjetnosti*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002.
- . *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1972.
- Pavličić, P. *Poetika manirizma*. Zagreb: August Cesarec, 1988.
- Replogle, C. "Not Parody, Not Burlesque: The Play within the Play in 'Hamlet'." *Modern Philology* 67.2.(1969): 150-159. Jstor. Web. 25/3/2016.
- Ryan, J. E. *Shakespeare's Symmetries: The Mirrored Structure of Action in the Plays*. Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2016.
- Shakespeare, W. *Hamlet*. Ed. John Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934 (c); 2009.
- Shapiro, J. A. *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.
- Smyth, C. H. "Mannerism and Maniera." *Readings in Italian Mannerism*. Ed. Liana de Girolami Cheney. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 69-113.



- Stevenson, R. "Hamlet's' Mice, Motes and Minching Malecho." *New Literary History* 33.3. (2002): 435-459. Jstor. Web. 19/7/2015.
- Sypher, W. *Four Stages of Renaissance Style: Transformations in Art and Literature 1400-1700*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955.
- Teskey, G. "Shakespeare's Styles." *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Jonathan F. S. Post. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 3-26.
- Thompson Oakes, E. "Killing the Calf in 'Hamlet'." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34.2. (1983): 215-216. *Jstor*. Web. 25/2/2016.
- Thorndike, A. H. "The Relations of 'Hamlet' to Contemporary Revenge Plays." *PMLA* 17.2. (1902): 125-220. Jstor. Web. 25/3/2016.
- Thorne, A. *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare*. London: Macmillan, 2000.
- Whall, H. M. "Hamlet and the Manner of Miniature." *Interfaces* 5. 295-315. 1994.  
<[http://college.holycross.edu/projects/shakespeare/PDFs/Whall\\_Hamlet.pdf](http://college.holycross.edu/projects/shakespeare/PDFs/Whall_Hamlet.pdf)>.
- Wright, G. T. "Hendiadys and 'Hamlet'." *PMLA* 96.2.(1981): 168-193. Jstor. Web. 25/3/2016.
- . *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.